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DEPT pass to USTR for DShackleford
USDOC for LCosta
STATE for OES/STAS for AReynolds, EAP for WBehn, IO/EDA for
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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [TRGY](#) [EAID](#)

SUBJECT: Mitigating Indoor Air Pollution - Geneva Connections

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See para 13.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: On April 15 the US Mission Geneva held a luncheon to encourage parties in Geneva to work on mitigating indoor air pollution and coordinate their efforts, and to brainstorm with delegates from affected countries about solutions. This meeting was attended by representatives from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the African Group (Algeria, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire), Bangladesh for the LDC Group, Norway as a potential donor, Philips Consumer Electronics, and U.S. Mission employees. Along with presentations by UNCTAD and WHO, the Philips representative demonstrated of an efficient wood fuel cook stove the company is developing for the Indian market. END SUMMARY

The Problem

¶3. (U) Indoor air pollution results in 1.6 million deaths yearly, primarily due to pneumonia, chronic respiratory disease and lung cancer. Women and children are particularly affected by indoor air pollution since they are generally responsible for the cooking and spend time inside maintaining the home. 59 percent of all indoor air pollution-attributable deaths are females, and 56 percent occur in children under five years of age.

¶4. (U) Philips Consumer Electronics demonstrated a high efficiency stove that they have recently developed to combat the problem of indoor air pollution in India. (Note: Philips will also present its stove to the UNCTAD Trade and Development Commission at its meeting on May 11-15. Mission Officer introduced the Philips stove as one of many solutions to the problem of mitigating indoor air pollution and stated that the Mission did not endorse this stove or any other product, but appreciated the opportunity to see a demonstration of an actual product being developed to address the problem of indoor air pollution.)

Need for awareness building

¶5. (SBU) A lively discussion followed presentations from WHO and Philips. Most striking was the defensive posture of African colleagues (Algeria, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire) who were initially

concerned that first world interest in efficient cook stoves was an attempt to blame African countries for climate change through wood smoke emissions (Note: the lunch was held the day prior to news articles on black carbon pollution). We assured the African delegates that this was not a climate change issue, and framed it as a health issue with ramifications for education, deforestation and watershed management. Nonetheless, the Africans remained skeptical about the extent of this problem in their particular region and about the mitigating effects on women and children. Mission will assist the WHO in holding further small informational sessions to discuss and present statistics to those countries greatly affected by indoor air pollution, so their Geneva delegates become supportive of efforts to resolve the problem.

Need for standard assessments to measure new technologies

¶6. (SBU) Carlos Dora, Coordinator Public Health and Environment Department at the WHO, described illness and deaths from indoor air pollution as one of the major health hazards facing developing countries and as extremely difficult to tackle due to its multifaceted nature. He said there has been enough science studying the problem over the past decade so we accurately know its locations and dimension. However, there has not been enough science devoted to solutions. According to Dora, there are many solutions to indoor air pollution in the form of improved stoves, but no standard assessments to understand what each technology offers, to compare the alternatives and to determine which work best under which circumstances. Dora said all technology solutions should be measured using a common yard stick. He added worldwide, there is only one randomized controlled study of an improved stove and that is now ongoing in Guatemala.

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Challenges to making stoves a viable business

¶7. (U) The Philips representative confirmed that standards for improved cook stoves don't exist yet. Philips is trying to develop standards with an NGO and other stove producers, but this research unfortunately raises the costs of Philips' already expensive stoves. Dora and Philips agreed to continue discussion on standards for testing stoves.

¶8. (U) Philips outlined the following challenges to development and commercial sale of improved cook stoves, and actions governments could take to promote the use of improved stoves:

- a. Lack of awareness of the problem among consumers. This means marketing dollars are needed to educate consumers on the dangers of indoor air pollution from traditional cooking methods, so consumers are interested in purchasing improved stoves. Alternatively, states and NGOs could educate consumers, which would avoid stove producers having to roll large marketing costs into the price of their stoves.
- b. Subsidize consumer acquisition. The Philips stove costs 60 euros for a model that needs to have its battery recharged weekly and 80 euros for a solar powered stove. These prices are prohibitive to billions of people. Philips is trying to reduce the cost of its stove, but has difficulty doing so when at the same time it is trying to make a safe, durable, easy to use product that cooks quickly. Therefore, Philips hopes to find donors who will subsidize stove purchases.
- c. Facilitate access to consumers and acquisition. Philips does not have its own rural distribution network. Creating a distribution network would make the stoves even more expensive and less viable. Therefore, Philips asked whether governments could provide the distribution network. Philips said they tried using NGOs to sell stoves in rural areas in India but the experience showed that NGOs are not suited for such a commercial activity.
- d. Facilitate multi-stake holder dialogues to help companies reach potential partners.
- e. Decrease duties and taxes on improved stoves.
- f. Support development costs of improved stoves.
- g. Allow carbon credits for use of improved stoves.

Some Successes in Bangladesh

¶9. (U) The Bangladesh delegate pointed to Bangladesh's experience with Grameen Shakti (www.gshakti.org) providing micro-credit to families to purchase solar power for their homes as a solution that addresses not only the need for clean cooking methods but provides electricity to the family for lights and appliances and dramatically improves living standards. The Bangladesh delegate said governments and NGOs should run awareness campaigns to alert consumers of the dangers of indoor air pollution. Whatever technical solutions are decided upon, the products should be manufactured locally with easily repairable and replaceable parts.

UNCTAD's role

¶10. (U) The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is the focal point for the UN system on trade and development and the inter-related issues of technology, sustainable development, investment and finance. As such it has the power to convene meetings that involve all stakeholders on these issues and therefore could be a useful forum to bring together those working on indoor air pollution and market based solutions. UNCTAD would like to address this issue in the broader context of providing rural energy and was enthusiastic about the potential to replicate the Bangladesh solar energy alternative in other countries. However, WHO Dora cautioned that despite the clear development benefits of electrifying rural areas, most people in developing countries do not choose to cook with electric power. (Dora did not clarify whether this was due to the lack of electricity or a cultural preference.)

¶11. (U) WHO Dora welcomed and encouraged UNCTAD's involvement in

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bringing trade and investment solutions to bear on the problem of indoor air pollution. He said an obstacle to effectively addressing the problem has been the need to have trade, development, and environment ministries as well as health ministries and the private sector all coordinate their efforts towards a solution. UNCTAD staff from the Investment Division will explore using the UNCTAD EMPRETEC network of business centers in 26 countries, including much of Africa, as a potential avenue for developing a reliable low cost distribution network for improved stoves.

Comment

¶12. (SBU) The luncheon meeting at the Mission captured many of the challenges to effectively resolving the problem of indoor air pollution. The Indians and Bangladeshis are clearly aware of the problem and actively working to resolve it. By contrast, Geneva delegates from the African countries were skeptical as to whether a problem really exists in their countries and how much attention resolving it deserves compared to other development challenges. Mission officers will continue to work with WHO to raise awareness among delegates from affected African countries and with UNCTAD and WHO to bring stakeholders together to brainstorm regarding the problem.

¶13. (U) Mission requests the Department invite action addressees to informally share information on indoor air pollution awareness campaigns, or on clean cook stove initiatives, taking place in their host countries. Please send comments to Lowam@state.gov and Brodey1x@state.gov.

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